IMAC IT Subcommittee Minutes

December 12, 2002 – Submitted by: Pam Waffle, ES Supervisor, Columbia County
DHFS, 1 W. Wilson, Room #672

Present: Bob Martin, Pam Kearn, Debbie Bigler, Jacaie Coutant, Joan Ellenbecker, Tony Sis, Kathleen Luedtke, Jill Jokela, Pam Waffle

By teleconference: Joan Kovach, Diane Peterson

Minutes from the November 14th meeting were distributed and approved.

CARES Enhancement "WISH LIST"

Counties that contributed "wish lists" for CARES enhancements include Milwaukee and Dane (previously), Marathon, Juneau, Columbia and Bayfield (sent in prior to the meeting). Debbie Bigler presented a spreadsheet with the first five counties' input listed and divided into customer service and payment accuracy categories according to the implications of each CARES enhancement.

Counties have many of the same issues. The most common related to the following items (not in priority order):
- Automatic data drops into CARES from other data exchange sources
- Alerts
- Program-related driver flows
- Word wrap function in case comments (technological limitations for this one)
- Companion case issues
- Combining MA programs into one category/ simplifying MA (policy & IT issue)

Discussion included feedback for training sessions; workers say there is too much to remember regarding what is not programmed into CARES, ie. what system intelligence will not do for you.

Joan Kovach shared Bayfield County feedback that included a priority of automated FFU calculations with special concern about the number of eligible recipients who are slipping through the cracks due to the manual FFU process.

The separate county lists will be combined into one list sorted by categories to indicate selling points for each CARES enhancement idea. Ideas and/or wish lists can still be sent to D.Bigler@milwcnty.com or Faxed to 414-289-5788.

Related to CARES enhancement issues, the IRS audit response was discussed. Potentially expensive and time-consuming building and IT improvements must be made to be fully in compliance with IRS standards. One IT issue involves proper encrypting of data during backup procedures. The option of dropping IRS cross-matches may not be possible due to MA requirements.

Query Driven Data Flow Project

Information was provided on the driver flow project that may move forward after a review is completed of the work done to this point. Current driver flow enhancements would consist of adding and subtracting items with the objective of "clean-up" as a first priority. An idea was discussed to add language to screen level help that not only describes fields but lists programs affected by each field.

Long- term plans involve web-based systems that appear to be more flexible. "Y-wrap" is one term being used in such discussion. The idea is that you would enter the web system with a log-in ID that would be interchangeable with all related web systems. Currently, the extranet is not used fully due to problems with lost or expired passwords. DWD requires a password but DHFS does not have that requirement. As information is moved to DHFS sites, it will no longer require the workweb password. Counties that need information that is currently located on DWD password-controlled locations are encouraged to let Bob Martin know that they would like this information moved off the extranet.

Communication Process

Debbie Bigler and Jacaie Coutant shared a handout of communication recommendations produced while working off of Amy Mendel-Clemens' communications methods survey. Information from the survey was highlighted as it related to CARES/IT issues and suggestions were summarized. Discussion ensued with appreciation for both the effort and results.

Suggestions included the following:
- Make major improvements to the Benefit Recovery Manual and CARES Guide.
- Review the need for CARES Automated Tracking System (CATS) for county staff.
- Review need for CARES Monthly Highlights and ETNs, possible incorporation of information elsewhere special RAQs.
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General recommendations included the following:
- All handbooks and manuals should be complete and on the internet.
- Notifications of updates put on DXBM to all, and emailed to CARES/Policy coordinators.
- More communication links on DWS website related to IM policy and CARES.
- Minimize the number of resources.
- Both policy/process updates and clarifications should move into manuals quickly.
- Add new chapter to the CARES Guide regarding known CARES problems and work-around instructions, recent fixes and planned changes.

In general, county staff especially liked the email information distribution lists and the Call Center website for its practical and easily accessible information.

Discussed online manuals and ideas for highlighting recent changes, including color for changes since the last time a particular worker accessed that page. The colored section would then change to black and white the next time the page was accessed by that worker.

Discussed forms and ideas for both accessing and filling out forms online before printing; also, adding a grouping for forms needed at application according to the program(s) requested.

Discussed application forms including the "sunsetting" of the combined CAF, and the idea for pre-printed mail-in review forms to be sent from the state attached with the review notice. There was general discussion about the increased county costs of printing forms and postage for mail-in application forms.

Discussed the IM Manual and the need to shorten it and put it online.

Discussed a SEARCH function to look for topics across the minutes of various committees on the IMAC site, and expanding the invitation to encourage readers to give feedback on CARES/IT issues.

Discussed need for information distribution method to communicate IT hardware and software needs. Example used was the recent upgrade to Adobe Reader version 5.0; several county staff are discouraged from making these types of regular updates.

At either the January or February meeting, this subcommittee will be requested to look at websites together and review the substantial changes to be made by DHFS.

Change Center Update

Milwaukee has a new phone number now but clients have not yet been fully informed about the change. Milwaukee's experience shows that, although the staffing level doesn't change with implementation of a change center, the work is done more efficiently. Time is saved playing "phone tag", delays are reduced due to incomplete information left on voice mail, and to the quick issuance of 10-day verification letters, and customer satisfaction has increased just by making a "real person" contact quickly.

Discussed the need for different levels of service in large, medium and small counties with possibly a way to purchase different levels of service with potential shared systems.

IMAC IT Project Priorities

The list was last updated on 11/14/02. At the IMAC meeting on 12/19/02, all chairs and co-chairs will attend a special strategic planning session to discuss information and decision flow, and the relationship in general, between IMAC and the subcommittees.

The management team will be making decisions soon regarding projects on the IT list such as the driver flow. Discussed some of the issues involved such as reorganization and splitting resources among long and short-term solutions.

A "FIND" feature similar to the work program feature is being discussed for IM programs at the Error Reduction subcommittee.

Final approval for phase 1 of the alerts project will be coming soon. A survey is being done to measure "hits" on alerts. This large project is being broken down into more manageable parts such as separating out the IVD alerts from other alerts. Some alerts are being reviewed for system enhancements that would negate the need for the alert. There is a concern to identify and keep the alerts needed to function between IM and W2 agencies.

The W-2 C&I and IMAC IT committees are both discussing the hardware/software list idea so will probably work together on this project.

Since it takes about 2 people around 6 months of time to plan a conference, discussion took place about alternatives to the IT Conference project.

CARES notice redesign has suffered a lag in activity possibly due to the split in the DWD/IM systems while the "whole picture" is re-identified. Discussed notice issuance at end-of-day rather than at each benefit confirmation as a way of reducing the number of notice suppressions.

Data exchange project is partly delayed due to reorganization of staff assignments; however, SSWS matches will be eliminated. The SSI auto update is almost complete. Moving child support income to an auto update system is proving to be more complicated due to prospective budgeting policy. The staff reorganization should result in improvement in that more staff will know how to coordinate between the Food Stamp and Medicaid programs.

Next Meeting: January 9, 2002
                   DHFS, 1 W. Wilson, Room #672